Overview

By successfully completing Journalism 1, you demonstrated that you have learned how to conduct an interview, take good notes, check your facts and write a basic news story. In Journalism 2, you will learn how to push those skills to the next level by refining your research, interviewing and analytical skills. You’ll learn how to get beyond Google and Wikipedia so that you can use online research tools that are both timely and reliable. You’ll learn what a “nut graf” is, and why neither you nor your readers can live without it. If you make the commitment to work and improve, by the end of this semester you will have emerged as a competent journalist who can report and write publication-quality news stories as well as in-depth features. These skills will serve you in good stead whether you seek a career in print, online journalism, television, radio or public relations.

Required reading

- Associated Press Stylebook. The School of Journalism requires that news and feature stories conform to AP style. You don’t have to memorize the entire stylebook, but you do have to memorize parts of it. There are also some good sections on grammar to which I will call your attention during the semester.
- The Boston Globe, daily and Sunday. You may read it in print or online, but you must be familiar with its contents on a daily basis — especially the front page and page one of the City & Region section. When we discuss a Globe story in class, I will expect that you’ve already read it. We may also have a few current-events quizzes based on the Globe’s coverage.
- The Northeastern News. Read it, bring it to class and — even better — write for it.
- Handouts and online reading as assigned.

School of Journalism attendance policy

The School of Journalism requires that you attend at least 80 percent of all scheduled class meetings. If you miss 20 percent or more of scheduled classes for any reason, you will automatically fail. Every absence will have some effect on my assessment of your class participation, which will be factored into your final grade. Chronic tardiness may result in my marking you down for additional absences. Journalism 2 is a hands-on, intensive course with a lot of class exercises. You will have a difficult time doing well if you miss more than two or three classes.

Given the purpose of Journalism 2, I also expect you to demonstrate professional work habits. Think of this class as a newsroom. Assignments are due by deadline — at the beginning of class — whether you show up that day or not. If you cannot attend class on any particular day, I expect you to let me know ahead of time, either by voice-mail or by e-mail.

University statement regarding academic honesty

Northeastern University is committed to the principles of intellectual honesty and integrity. All members of the Northeastern community are expected to maintain complete honesty in all academic work, presenting only that
which is their own work in tests and all other assignments. If you have any questions regarding proper attribution of
the work of others, please contact me prior to submitting the work for evaluation.

A personal note: The two capital offenses of journalism are fabrication and plagiarism. Commit either of these and
you can expect to receive an “F” for the course, with possible referral to the student court. At any time I may ask for
contact information for your sources in order to make sure that your interviews are on the level. My presumption is
that you are honest. But as Ronald Reagan said, “Trust, but verify.”

And here is my attribution: Parts of this syllabus are taken from J2 syllabuses prepared by Carlene Hempel, Liz
Matson and Susan Ryan-Vollmar.

Special accommodations

If you have physical, psychiatric or learning disabilities that may require accommodations for this course, please
meet with me after class or during conference hours to discuss what adaptations might be helpful to you. The
Disability Resource Center, 20 Dodge Hall (x2675), can provide you with information and assistance. The
university requires that you provide documentation of your disability to the DRC.

Course requirements

We will write a lot in this class. I will be your editor, and I’ll be available to discuss your work on an individual
basis in person, by e-mail and by phone. You should read the syllabus in detail now. You will see that assignments
come up very quickly, and you will fall behind if you do not plan. All writing must conform to the Associated Press
Stylebook. Interviews must be conducted in person or by phone. I will allow e-mail interviews only in very rare
instances, and only when I give permission in advance. E-mail interviews can be a valuable tool for working
professionals, but you are trying to learn the art of interviewing — something you simply can’t do over the Internet.
If you interview someone by e-mail, you must make that clear in your story. It is unethical to make it appear as
though you actually spoke with that person.

In all written work, your grades will suffer if you miss deadline, or if you make errors in facts, spelling, grammar,
punctuation and AP style. Of special importance are the proper names of people, places, organizations and the like.
Every misspelled name will result in your assessment for any given piece of work being lowered by one letter grade.
And yes, if you spell Alan Macdonald’s name “MacDonald,” I will consider that a misspelling.

Rules of the road

You are required to submit your work by e-mail. I’ve made the switch from printouts to electronic submissions for a
variety of reasons: that’s how you would do it at any professional news organization; no one can read my
handwriting; and, most important, I can edit your work more closely by computer than I can with a red pen. Please
keep in mind the following.

• I imagine that nearly all of you are using Microsoft Word. I hope that’s the case — I don’t like Word, but it
  is ubiquitous. If you are not using Word, save your file in either plain text or RTF format. Use whatever font
  and size you like.
• I expect you to file your story with me before class. It is your responsibility to get your story to me by
deadline and to make sure I have it, even if you are not attending class on that day. Make sure you
remember to attach your story to your e-mail.

Also:

• Please respect your fellow students by gracing us with your presence mentally as well as physically. In
  other words, do not spend the class period checking your e-mail or surfing the Web. I am neither as
  entertaining nor as user-friendly as Facebook, but what I have to say will be more important to your success
  in this course.
• Have fun. I hope you’ll find that journalism is an enjoyable and rewarding craft.
Assignments, deadlines and grades

- Sept. 12: Quiz on grammar and AP style (2.5 percent)
- Sept. 17: Obituary, 600 words (5 percent)
- Sept. 24: Talker, 700 to 800 words (10 percent)
- Oct. 1: Story pitch from a public record (5 percent)
- Oct. 10: Coverage of a government proceeding, 700 to 800 words (5 percent)
- Oct. 15: Story memo on enterprise piece (5 percent)
- Oct. 18: In-class deadline news story, 500 words (2.5 percent)
- Oct. 25: Quiz on public records and computer-assisted reporting (2.5 percent)
- Oct. 29: Description of online data resource (5 percent)
- Nov. 7: News or feature story from online resource, 1,000 words (10 percent)
- Nov. 8: Quiz on reporters’ rights and responsibilities (2.5 percent)
- Nov. 14: Top 400 to 600 words of your enterprise story (5 percent)
- Nov. 29: Enterprise story, 2,000 to 2,500 words
- Dec. 11 (finals week): Rewrite of your enterprise story (20 percent)

Please note that the percentages add up to 80. The other 20 percent will come from my assessment of your attendance, your participation in class discussions and your performance on in-class exercises, of which there will be quite a few.

On your enterprise story, you will not receive a grade except for the rewrite — but you will still be marked down if you fail to turn in your first draft by deadline.

Despite the seeming mathematical precision of how I will arrive at your final grade, I am most interested in seeing hard work and improvement. Low grades at the beginning of the semester will not necessarily drag you down if you are earning higher grades at the end. There will be opportunities for extra credit and for rewrites. I will explain how to do that in more detail during the semester.

You must earn a “C” or better and a passing grade on your final project to continue to Journalism 3.

Semester schedule

Week 1  Sept. 5 and 6

- Class topic: Course overview and review; the ethics of journalism
- Reading: Fedler, Chapter 21; start reading the Boston Globe and the Northeastern News

Week 2  Sept. 10, 12 and 13

- Class topic: Grammar and style; obituaries
- Reading: Fedler, Chapters 1 and 2 (review) and Chapter 11
- This week’s assignment: You will write a 600-word obituary of a public figure who isn’t actually dead. You are not being asked to write a fake obit; rather, you will write an advance obit of the sort that many news organizations assign and keep in their files. You’ll have to do quite a bit of research to write a complete, lively story. Due on Sept. 17.
  - Note: On Wednesday, we will have a quiz on grammar and AP style.

Week 3  Sept. 17, 19 and 20

- Class topic: Finding sources and interviewing them
- Reading: Fedler, Chapters 9, 10 and 16
- This week’s assignment: You will write a “talker” — a news feature for which you will interview at least five people, including three experts. You will be given a topic related to a current event and write a short article based on those interviews. Length: 700 to 800 words. Due on Sept. 24.
Week 4  
Sept. 24, 26 and 27

• Class topic: Local public records
• Reading: Fedler, Chapter 15
• This week’s assignment: Go to a local courthouse, police station or city or town hall and find a public record that captures your interest. Make a photocopy of the record and come to class with an idea of a story that you could pitch based on that record. **Due on Oct. 1.**

Week 5  
Oct. 1, 3 and 4

• Class topic: Covering a government proceeding; more about interviewing
• This week’s assignment: You will cover a government proceeding — a court session, a city council hearing, a planning board meeting or the like — and write a news story. Your story must incorporate a public record related to the proceeding.
• Length: 700 to 800 words. **Due on Oct. 10.**

Week 6  
Oct. 10 and 11

• Class topic: Enterprise story ideas
• This week’s reading: Fedler, Chapter 13
• This week’s assignment: Write a half-page or one-page pitch, single-spaced, about your final project, including the publication to which you will attempt to sell it. Your final article will be an enterprise piece, about 2,000 to 2,500 words long, and must include a computer-assisted-reporting component and at least eight interviews. **Your pitch is due on Oct. 15.**

Week 7  
Oct. 15, 17 and 18

• Class topic: Enterprise reporting, continued
• Reading: Fedler, Chapter 14
• This week’s assignment: On Monday you will be given a topic for which you must conduct at least three interviews before Friday’s class. On Thursday, you must come to class with your notes and in one hour write a 500-word news story. You will be asked to list the names of your sources and their phone numbers at the end of your story.

Week 8  
Oct. 22, 24 and 25

• Class topic: Computer-assisted reporting
• This week’s reading: Fedler, Chapter 17
• This week’s assignment: Find an online data resource to share with your classmates. Write a one- to two-page description of the site and include your thoughts on how it might be useful for a reporter researching a newspaper article. List three story ideas for which you could use the data you have found. Make enough copies to pass out to everyone in class. **Due on Oct. 29.**
• Note: On Thursday we will have a quiz on public records and computer-assisted reporting.

Week 9  
Oct. 29, 31 and Nov. 1

• Class topic: Computer-assisted reporting, continued; structuring and organizing a news feature
• This week’s reading: Fedler, Chapters 20 and 21 (review from Week 1)
• This week’s assignment: Using data from your online resource, write a 1,000-word news or feature story, with at least six interviews. **Due on Nov. 7.**
Week 10  Nov. 5, 7 and 8

- Class topic: A reporter’s rights and responsibilities
- This week’s assignment: Write the top of your enterprise story, 400 to 600 words, single-spaced. It must fit onto one page. I’m looking for your lede, your nut and some idea of how the rest of your story will begin. You must make copies for everyone in class. **Due on Nov. 14.**
- Note: On Thursday we will have a quiz on reporters’ rights and responsibilities.

Week 11  Nov. 14 and 15

- Class topic: Story-top workshops — we’ll meet and discuss your story tops and how to improve them.

Week 12  Nov. 19

- Class topic: Story-top workshops, continued.

Week 13  Nov. 26, 28 and 29

- Class topic: Troubleshooting your enterprise pieces. Please be prepared to discuss how your stories are progressing — what reporting problems you’re running into, writing dilemmas and the like. **Your enterprise story will be due at the beginning of class on Nov. 29.**

Week 14  Dec. 3 and 5

- Class topic: Wrap-up. I will return your edited enterprise pieces to you so that you can get started on your rewrites.

Finals week  Dec. 7-14

- There is no final exam in this course. The rewrite of your enterprise piece will be due on Tuesday, Dec. 11, at noon.